

Bike/Walk Midland Plan Enhances Safety

Safety education is an integral element of Midland's non-motorized transportation (NMT) plan. All road users are the target audience for this education, and that includes pedestrians, who certainly need to cross the street to get to their destinations. The safety of bicyclists, pedestrians, in-line skaters, and power chair users depends on their own behavior AND the behavior of drivers. Improving those behaviors improves safety for all citizens, and will be a key focus for the education component of the NMT plan.

For all road users, intersections are the place where accidents are most likely to happen, and so where everyone needs to be most alert. Drivers need to be looking for sidewalk users and bicycles on the street as well as other cars. There is a tendency to drive on "auto pilot" and to only watch for "large objects" such as cars and trucks, and this is only aggravated by all the distracted driving we see today. Bicyclists need to behave as vehicles when they are on the street so that their movements are predictable and they obey the law. Pedestrians can greatly enhance their own safety by establishing eye contact with drivers as they cross streets, and by anticipating turning moves by drivers.

The most dangerous intersections in Midland for bicycles are Eastlawn/Saginaw, Saginaw/Washington, Washington/Haley, and Sugnet/Orchard. It is worth noting that three of these intersections have traffic lights, which should make intersections safer. These same intersections experience a relatively high rate of vehicle accidents as well. When the NMT plan is fully implemented, there will be bike lanes on Eastlawn, Sugnet, and Orchard, so these intersections will require additional focus by all road users to insure safety. The good news is that several studies have shown that increases in NMT users actually decreases accident rates as all road users learn to safely interact.

Safe behavior by all is the key.

For more information: www.midland-mi.org/government/departments/planning/Planning/planninghome.htm